

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 (ISO) R

DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN:MDRAPER:MMK

APPROVED BY NEA:ALATHERTON, JR

S/S:RKUCHEL

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S E C R E T STATE 013823 TOSEC 010005

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, LE, SY

SUBJECT: ACTION MEMORANDUM: PROPOSED INSTRUCTIONS FOR
APPROACH TO SYRIANS ON LEBANESE SITUATION
(S/S NO.7601243)

FROM ATHERTON

1. FOLLOWING, IN ACCORDANCE WITH YOUR INSTRUCTIONS, IS
PROPOSED MESSAGE TO AMBASSADOR MURPHY IN DAMASCUS REQUEST-
ING HIM TO RAISE THE DANGERS OF THE LEBANESE SITUATION
WITH SYRIAN CHIEF OF STAFF SHIHABI.

2. BEGIN TEXT: TO DAMASCUS -- IMMEDIATE, SECRET/NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PFOR, LE, SY

SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION: PLA MOVEMENTS
FOR AMBASSADOR FROM SECRETARY

3. FYI. ALLON SENT JANUARY 19 MESSAGE TO SECRETARY
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SAYING ISRAELI INTELLIGENCE INDICATES THAT IN THE LAST

TWO DAYS TWO BATTALIONS OF PLA HAVE ENTERED LEBANON. ONE IS BATTALION OF THE HITTIN BRIGADE WHICH WENT TO TRIPOLI. ANOTHER IS A BATTALION OF QADASIYAH BRIGADE WHICH WENT INTO ZAHLE. A THIRD BATTALION, ALSO OF THE QADSIYAH BRIGADE,

WILL ENTER ZAHLE JAN 19. ANOTHER BATTALION OF THE SAME BRIGADE IS PREPARING TO ENTER. ISRAELI MESSAGE SAYS INSTRUCTIONS HAVE BEEN GIVEN FOR MOBILIZATION OF THE RESERVE FORCES OF THE PLA. ISRAELI MESSAGE STATES THESE FORCES ARE GENERALLY UNDER OPERATIONAL CONTROL OF THE SYRIAN GENERAL STAFF, AND ARE ON TOP OF THE 2,000 SAIQA WHICH ARE ALREADY IN LEBANON. ALLON EXPRESSES CONCERN AT THIS DEVELOPMENT AND REGARDS IT AS THE FIRST STAGE OF A SYRIAN INCURSION INTO LEBANON.

2. ALLON MADE CLEAR HE DID NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SYRIANS WILL BRING IN ADDITIONAL BATTALIONS, INCLUDING REGULAR SYRIAN BATTALIONS UNDER PALESTINIAN FLAGS, AS THEY DID IN JORDAN IN 1970. HE SAID ISRAELI ESTIMATE WAS THAT THESE BATTALIONS CAN OVERRUN THE CHRISTIANS AT THE MOMENT.

3. WE HAVE SENT YOU IN SEPARATE CHANNEL OUR INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE. END FYI.

4. IF YOU HAVE NOT YET ALREADY SEEN SHIHABI WITH REGARD TO LEBANESE SITUATION, YOU SHOULD INCORPORATE POINTS BELOW WHEN YOUR MEETING TAKES PLACE. IF YOU SAW SHIHABI BEFORE ARRIVAL THIS CABLE, YOU SHOULD GO BACK TO HIM TO MAKE THESE POINTS.

5. YOU SHOULD SAY TO SHIHABI THAT WE ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY CONCERNED BY THE DETERIORATING SITUATION IN LEBANON, WHICH HAS SERIOUS IMPLICATIONS FOR AREA PEACE AND STABILITY. THE RESIGNATION OF KARAME, ONLY THE LATEST IN A SERIES OF NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENTS, IS TO BE DEPLORED, SINCE THIS COULD HARDEN CONFESSIONAL LINES AND DENY THE GOVERNMENT HIS EFFECTIVE BRAND OF LEADERSHIP AT A CRITICAL JUNCTURE.

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6. BECAUSE OF THESE TRENDS, WE HAVE AUTHORIZED OUR PRESS AND OTHER SPOKESMEN TO TAKE LINES DESCRIBED IN JAN 19 PRESS GUIDANCE(SEPTEL). YOU SHOULD INFORM SHIHABI THAT, AS HE CAN SEE, THIS GUIDANCE IS PARTLY AIMED AT ENCOURAGING KARAME TO WITHDRAW HIS RESIGNATION AND REMAIN IN OFFICE WHILE REITERATING OUR BASIC POSITION, WHICH INCLUDES OPPOSITION TO PARTITION AND OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE.

7. IN SAYING TO SHIHABI THAT WE BELIEVE WE SHARE A COMMON INTEREST IN BRINGING THE SITUATION IN LEBANON UNDER CONTROL AND IN DAMPING DOWN FLAMES THAT COULD IGNITE A WIDER CONFLAGRATION, WE WOULD LIKE HIS APPRAISAL OF PRESENT DEVELOPMENTS AND HOW HE FORESEES THE FUTURE COURSE OF EVENTS.

8. WE HOPE, OF COURSE, THAT THE SYRIANS WILL DO WHATEVER THEY CAN TO SECURE A CEASE-FIRE AND TO LAY THE GROUND-WORK FOR A COMPROMISE POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. IN DOING SO, WE ARE PRESUMING THAT THEY WOULD WISH TO ADVISE RESTRAINT ON THE FEDAYEEN AND OTHERS WHO MAY WANT TO MOVE TO AN ALL-OUT SHOWDOWN WITH THEIR ADVERSARIES.

9. YOU SHOULD GO ON TO SAY TO SHIHABI THAT WE HAVE RECEIVED INDICATIONS THAT THE FLOW OF REINFORCEMENTS TO THE FEDAYEEN IN LEBANON MAY HAVE BEEN INCREASING RECENTLY AND THAT SOME OF THESE REINFORCEMENTS MAY BE IN THE FORM OF PLA UNITS. SUCH MOVEMENTS ARE BOUND TO BE NOTICED BY THE ISRAELIS AND INEVITABLY WILL KINDLE TENSIONS.

10. YOU SHOULD INFORM SHIHABI THAT, IN VOICING OUR OPPOSITION TO OUTSIDE INTERVENTION FROM ANY QUARTER, WE HAVE BEEN ADDRESSING THE ISRAELIS AS WELL AS THE SYRIANS. THE ISRAELIS, HOWEVER, ARE LIKELY TO BECOME CONCERNED WITH ANYTHING THAT THEY MIGHT INTERPRET AS SYRIAN ACQUIESCENCE IN OR SUPPORT FOR A MAJOR MOVEMENT OF PLA MILITARY UNITS FROM SYRIA INTO LEBANON, A MOVEMENT WHICH THE ISRAELIS ARE SURE TO CLAIM COULD BE STOPPED BY THE SYRIANS. YOU SHOULD IMPRESS ON SHIHABI THAT WE ARE DOUBTFUL WE COULD PREVENT THE ISRAELIS FROM REACTING TO WHAT THEY MIGHT CONCLUDE IS OUTRIGHT INTERVENTION BY SYRIA, PARTICULARLY IF THEY CONCLUDED MAJOR SHIFT IN
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BALANCE OF POWER IN LEBANON WAS IN THE MAKING.

11. YOU MIGHT THEN EXPLAIN TO SHIHABI THAT WE HAVE WATCHED SYRIAN EFFORTS TO MEDIATE THE LEBANESE SITUATION AND HAVE WISHED THEM WELL. IT IS IN THIS SPIRIT THAT WE BELIEVE WE OWE THE SYRIANS OUR FRANK JUDGMENT OF THE DANGERS IN THE PRESENT SITUATION. WHATEVER DIFFERENCES WE AND THE SYRIANS MAY HAVE ON OTHER ISSUES, WE BELIEVE WE SHARE A COMMON INTEREST IN STABILIZING THE PRESENT SITUATION IN LEBANON IN A WAY THAT TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THE POLITICAL IMPERATIVES THERE AND ASSURES A SENSE OF SECURITY FOR ALL ITS COMMUNITIES.

12. RECOMMENDATION: THAT YOU APPROVE THE ABOVE TEXT.

APPROVE DISAPPROVE

13. DRAFTED:NEA/ARN,APPROVED:NEA:ALATHERTON,JR.,
CLEARED: S/S:RKUCHEL(SUBS) SISCO

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